

Western Grain Transportation Act

tration—Personal correspondence of Ministers. (b) Interdepartmental correspondence; The Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom)—Labour Conditions—Unemployment in Saskatchewan.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

WESTERN GRAIN TRANSPORTATION ACT
MEASURE TO ESTABLISH

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-155, an Act to facilitate the transportation, shipping and handling of western grain and to amend certain Acts in consequence thereof, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Transport; and Motion No. 34 (Mr. Benjamin).

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, I want to put some comments on record regarding the motion proposed by the NDP to amend Bill C-155. It would allow the Administrator to make arrangements with the trucking companies for one purpose and one purpose only. Clause 17(4) of the Bill, referring to the Administrator, states as follows:

—in his opinion, such agreements would be in the best interests of the grain producers.

I can only surmise that the NDP wants to delete this section because it is not interested in what is in the best interests of the grain producers, and I want to show why I think so.

My good friend, the Hon. Member for Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom), said that if we do not accept this amendment then we are interested in the centralizing of powers. If he looked at the effect of the amendment he would see that it would centralize all grain movement in the hands of the boardrooms of the CPR and the CNR. That is what Members of the NDP want, apparently. When they talk about centralization they should look very carefully at the effect of the amendment.

It is beyond question that if trucking of grain were allowed, we would get a competitive system which is sorely needed in the transportation of grain in western Canada.

I should like to give an example not related to the grain industry to make a point. At one time almost all new cars manufactured in Ontario were moved to western Canada by truck. Previously they had been moved by rail, but for two reasons the change to truck was made. The first reason the switch was made to trucking was that delivery dates could be more closely met, and the second reason was that damage to the vehicles was less than when they were delivered by rail. At that time most cars were put on boxcars at an angle and damage resulted. Today cars from Ontario and Quebec are moved to western Canada almost totally by rail. The reason for this is that the trucking industry was competitive and forced the railways to give better service and bring in new

modes of handling the cars. That would be the effect of this amendment.

At the present time grain on the Prairies is moved by truck. I do not want to refer to my home community but I know that when people say communities cannot survive because they do not have a railway, it simply is not true. My home community never had a railroad. For certain historical reasons, when the railroad was to go to that community, the people asked that it not come through. Perhaps it was the only exception on the Prairies; I do not know that. The fact remains that it never had a railroad, but two excellent highways go into the community and serve the area. This means there is competition within the trucking industry.

When the NDP says time after time, that trucking communities will suffer in that way, they are expressing a valid fear, but I do not think history backs that up.

I can give another example of what trucking will do for competition. In Manitoba there was a virtual monopoly on cement. What the producers discovered was that they could buy cement in Ontario, in Central Canada, put it on an empty grain lake carrier and drop it into Duluth, Minnesota. From there a fleet of trucks would haul that cement from Duluth, Minnesota, right through Manitoba. There is no duty on it because it is a Canadian product in transit. They are delivering cement, Mr. Speaker, by truck and boat into Manitoba from Ontario cheaper than they could buy it in Manitoba. That is what monopolies do, Mr. Speaker. The only reason I point this out is that the more modes of transportation there are, the more competitive will be the market, the better will be the price for the movement of grain and the better will be the service to the producers. That is why this clause appeals to me, because it can be put into effect in the best interests of the producer. I cannot understand why the Hon. Members in the New Democratic Party—and I am not trying to belittle their arguments and the regions they represent—if their argument is as valid as they honestly and sincerely put to the House, would not allow another mode of transport that might be valid in terms of that competitive edge in another part of the Prairies. It is one way or the other. They do not want to see it any other way, Mr. Speaker.

● (1610)

What is also of importance is the brief the Manitoba trucking industry presented before the committee. We find out, for example, that in Manitoba alone, a Province of one million people, 10,000 people are employed in the trucking industry, with an annual payroll of \$140 million. Hon. Members from the NDP are saying, "We want to give it all to the railroads. We want the railroads to have the monopoly. We want to give all the money to the railroads and we do not want these Manitobans to have a share of the market." That is what these Hon. Members say in the House. What do they say out in the country when they are confronted by the trucking industry? We should listen to no better an authority than the transport critic, the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) who, before the Manitoba Trucking Commission in